



NEW VOICES SPEAK TO OUR CHILDREN

THE new voices of movies, radio, and comics speak to our children, and we do not always like what they say. We are concerned about their exposure to the more emotionally upsetting, crude and vulgar elements in these modern influences. But censorship has never been very effective. The movies, the radio, and the funnies have become an inseparable part of young people's lives today, and children deeply resent being isolated from the common interests of their group.

SINCE we cannot stop these interests, even if it were wise to try, we had better understand them. In the phantasy world of the movies, the radio, and reading, millions of children undoubtedly find satisfactory answers to their cravings for excitement, adventure, aggression, and a sense of success and power—the very same needs that were satisfied in the past by fairy and folk tales.

OUR concern should be not with a wholesale condemnation of these vicarious experiences but in seeing how well they are supplemented by active experiences in real life. A dangerous, excessive interest in phantasy usually comes when active satisfactions are lacking. Children will seize eagerly on the opportunity to *do* things rather than to play a passive rôle, and it is up to us to provide more opportunities.

IF WE use the positive rather than the negative approach to these new media, we see the potentialities (and in the case of the movies and the radio we already have some magnificent accomplishments) of something beyond mere entertainment. They can play a part in children's real education, broadening their outlook and enriching their imaginations.

THE EDITORS

youngsters. These efforts are not to be scorned. They have had some effect. But the chances are that the parents who care the most about their children and thus fortify them to be able to see most anything without evil effects, are the very ones who bide by the recommendations of the experts and send their children to the approved shows. By and large, the nation over, however, we can assume that children are seeing what adults are seeing.

Well how goes it with adult movies? To my amateur eye they seem to be going in several directions at once. Some are cheaper and bawdier than they used to be. Others show that, in a way, the movies are growing up to match the grown-up interests and sensitivities of the audience. (The old hoax about the public having a twelve-year-old mind was bad enough; but far worse was what people thought of this twelve-year-old mind—which I have found to be astute, sophisticated and sensitive to human relations far beyond the expectations of stodgy adults.) Movies like *Citizen Kane*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *Dark Victory*, *Woman of the Year* are based on the assumption that the American public understands subtleties of human behavior and is interested in following them on the screen. So the children profit by this trend. Few children could live through *How Green Was My Valley* without identifying with the boy and finding their childish but none the less serious problems lived out before them on the screen. The understanding of why people came to America, the struggle of the workers with their own conflicts as well as with the owners, lends meaning to present struggles within our society. The picture of a simple, happy marriage, seen all too seldom on the screen, or indeed in literature, may mean little consciously to children but it gives them in their deeper selves something to remember and pattern upon in their concept of marriage.

Or let us look at *Abe Lincoln of Illinois* and think how much this kind of film can mean to growing boys who are seeking always for ideals and idols, if you will. Or *Juarez*. In the first, Lincoln standing out for rights of Negroes. In the latter, Juarez standing out for the rights of Indians. And in both, men as central characters who have the deep human elements of heroism, not the flashiness so often associated with historical figures.

Then turn toward the output of anti-fascist films, released since the policy of our own state department became clear. Some of these films deal openly and realistically with the viciousness and cruelty of fascist oppressors. But, by and large, these films tell the

truth, and if anything tell it too late, not too harshly. It is important that our children know what it is this war is about . . . what is happening to other people's children in the world. They can take it. What they cannot take is the frustration of knowing something is wrong but not being told what it is.

Of course, there are the films made (as A. A. Milne's poems are written) supposedly for a child audience but delectable to adults, as well as Walt Disney's *Dumbo* or his ever lovable *Donald Duck*, now paying his income tax. The thing Disney is so smart about is his use of animals—investing them with human qualities. Children everywhere love animals. In fact some children get most of the warm and consistent affection they know from animal pets. If a dog loves you, there's something you can count upon! He won't warm your feet by snuggling around them one day and snap at them the next. Perhaps that's why all of us, at whatever age, love animals and universally find enjoyment in Disney's characters. But Disney is also smart in the kinds of human qualities he gives his characters. He knows human relations and oftentimes conceals in an animated short (as in *The Mouse Who Wanted Wings*) a grand dose of practical psychology. Children love Disney's films, as we have said. And fortunately it is an experience they can keep with them as they grow up.

NEWSREELS? We don't know just how newsreels affect children. We need a thumping good study of this before we can say we are giving anything better than guesses when we talk about them. War news is exorbitantly interesting to some people, moderately so to others. Still others want to know what is going on in the world in order to be informed citizens, but they like to dispense with gory details of bombings and torpedoings. How do the children feel about it? They fall into the same classes. Some see all the war horror they can find. Others shy away from any of it. Our best guess is that this goes back to deep-lying adjustments within the child. Over-interest in gory details and horror may mean too much frustration and a desire to see others suffer. Hysterical fear may mean insecurity at home and need of more reassurance than the particular child is getting. The child brings to the movie all that he is and has been. Only this can explain his reactions. What to do? Watch the effects on the child. If the movie is the straw that breaks the emotional adjustment, add a diet of other activities that compete with the attractiveness of movies. Surveys made of movie atten-

dance, without exception, show that when given the chance children prefer active sports to movie-going anyway. No doubt some children are too insecure to take the fare offered them in a long movie session. Then don't blame the movies, any more than you blame the ice cream if the child eats too much of it. Between you and the child lies an answer to meeting the problem.

New developments in educational movies indicate a growing-up process, too. There was a day when an educational movie might just as well have been somebody reading the text-book aloud and showing snapshots to illustrate it, so academic and "teachery" were they. Now we have a grand array of films, most of them along the "documentary" line, aimed to tell the story of life as it is lived, not the story of the text-book. Thus children take field trips through films to Kentucky to see marginal rural life in *And So They Live*; to South America to get a bird's-eye view of people who are our allies and neighbors in *Americans All*; to Canada to see how a community organized for civilian defense in *Call For Volunteers*; to Dover, England, to see how normal life goes on even after persistent blitzes in *The Front Line*; to a tiny rural British town to see how school life goes on in wartime in *Village School*; to the streets of New York and a day with Henry Street nurses in *Day After Day*; to a delightful nursery-farm-school where little children live richly and happily in *A Child Went Forth*.^{*} Our children are given seven-league boots through such documentary films.

Defense preparations loom large in children's lives these days, too. They are having practice drills for raids and blackouts. In schools where there is wise guidance the children are learning what it is all for, are helping to get sand, pails, shovels, and blackout supplies ready for coming emergencies. The sense of knowing what may be expected, as well as the reassurance of being in on the plans and being a part of them, is one of the best safeguards for child stability in times of such crises. There are movies being developed by our government and there are splendid films from England that help children both to see what it is all about and to learn what to do in the event of difficulty. *Fighting the Fire Bomb* shows how to put out incendiaries. It shows, too, how they are made and what makes them work, a subject of endless interest to older children. *Shunter Black's Night Off* shows a British worker who leaps into

action on his night off to put out an incendiary fire on a munitions train. *Goofer Trouble* is a warning from Britain of the difficulties encountered when people disobey orders and come into the streets during raid alerts.

These and many other films, intended perhaps for oldsters, are equally useful and valuable for youngsters. They want to be partners with us in all that goes on. No evasive spelling of words to keep them out of it. No sir! British children showed us that they elect to be with their mothers and daddies fighting it through, rather than off, alone, away from their dear ones, no matter how fine and safe their evacuation billet may be.

I READ back over these paragraphs and wonder if perhaps you will think I have been whitewashing movies. Indeed not. I have just not taken the space and your good time to repeat the obvious condemnations hurled at the bad movies. After all, when we know a commodity is poor we make our judgment effective by refusing to buy it. Well, when the box-office drops because you consider pictures poor, then poor pictures won't be made any more. And surely parents are not such jelly-fish that their children can go willy-nilly to whatever is at the nearby theatre. These are days for cultivating home enjoyments, for relearning the stories we were told by parents and grandparents before the days of radio, for rebuilding the ping-pong table and cleaning up the basement for a recreation center. As spring comes on we may have to have long blackouts and we shall have to learn to amuse ourselves and help our children to amuse themselves.

This may mean much more selective movie-going in the future. Instead of movies almost every night of the week as it automatically is now for some children, it will be movies when there's a good show to see. And more than likely more of the family will go together. Parents will know more about what is in the movies the children are seeing. And in those long and quiet hours at home there can be discussion of the story, the characters, the way they worked out their problems. Through talking over what we have seen, we can raise our standards of what we want to see, and we can look with more critical discrimination upon the movies we do see. Studies made of groups viewing movies and then having discussions follow, show that this does happen to children in school. There is no reason why the home cannot exert the same influence. Parents will learn through such dis-

(Continued on page 96)

^{*} Information about all these films and many more can be had from the New York University Film Library, 71 Washington Square South, New York City.

The Children Tune In

By SIDONIE MATSNER GRUENBERG

THE radio is here to stay. Furthermore, the adult population is no longer divided into radio fans and those who wish that this modern miracle had never been invented. We take it for granted that the latest international news and the finest symphony concert are ours for the turning of a knob. While none of us likes everything that the air waves bring to our ears, most of us would feel lost without a radio of some sort in our homes. When it comes to thinking of radio in relation to our children, however, we are not so casual.

Adults generally can take the radio or leave it alone. But most parents seem to feel that children leave it alone too little, and "take" mostly what parents disapprove. Because the taking and leaving have been made so easy, the management of children's listening has created new problems for the home; and parents are naturally confused. Certain advantages which the radio has over books and playthings tempt us to use it as an easy means of keeping children quiet when we are busy with other matters. But we are also alarmed by some of the things that keep the children quiet and spellbound hour after hour.

Some conscientious parents, in their bewilderment, have restricted their children's radio-listening to a half-hour or so a day, without regard to the programs, to the children's plans, or their interests. This is perhaps on the principle that it is all very bad, but a sub-lethal dose is safe. Still other parents have forbidden certain specific programs, attempting, as with movies or books, to exercise some censorship. While in many cases such regulations may bring no violent outward reactions, we cannot assume that they have therefore worked satisfactorily. In the long run such restrictions must fail, for, like all arbitrary rules, they stir resentments and make children feel that parents don't understand.

When children are deprived of some of these extremely popular programs, they not only feel that they are missing a fascinating or exciting experience but they feel themselves deprived of important social values. If you are greeted by your friends with the question, "Did you hear *Jack Armstrong* last night?" it is pretty bad to be obliged to say "No." It would be even more humiliating to be obliged to ask "Who is *Jack Armstrong*?"

These children's programs, whatever we may think

of them as pictures of life, do present characters—heroes and villains, dummies, and stooges—who have come to be living parts of the children's culture. And every child who is aware of these unfolding sagas wants to be in on them—he wants to share these with his companions, not merely "enjoy" them by himself. It is just as important to know *The Lone Ranger* or *Little Orphan Annie*, or whoever it is that holds the attention of any particular child's group, as it is for older children—and for many of their parents, too—to know the heroes of the baseball field, let us say, or to know the implications of such terms as "Dodgers" or "batting average."

Knowing all this, modern mothers have been thinking more realistically of improving the quality of the radio programs at the source. Instead of being content merely with restrictions and prohibitions, they have joined in protests to the program-makers against the crude, the violent, the sensational fare that has been fed to their children. These protests have been heard, and they have brought results. Radio writers and producers have been made aware of the existence of mothers, and, if they have not learned to respect them, they have at least learned to fear them—almost as much as they fear sponsors or official censors. Unfortunately, however, the results have not been exactly what the protesting mothers had hoped for. When programs were "reformed" to meet parental criticism—when the blood and thunder were removed—they also became that much less attractive. The children were driven away and, ultimately, the sponsors were driven away. Stopping these programs might have been the best possible result, except that the children now started listening to adult programs never meant for their ears, programs with thrills and excitement and questionable behavior codes of their own. Deprived of their own childishly fantastic world, they turned to the mysteries and "soap operas" with their sentimentalized and falsely distorted conceptions of love and life. These were not the results intended.

It would be more helpful if, instead of looking upon children's taste in radio programs as evidence of depravity and perversity, we considered it an index to various childhood drives and desires. These more fundamental demands of children operate, whether we have any radio or not; and they must somehow be met. Boys and girls cannot know the basic reasons

for their preferences, their enthusiasms, and their dislikes. The child is not aware that he is seeking "vicarious experience" or that he is reaching out for the expansion of his own personality by way of such experiences. It is sufficient for him that he likes a certain program. It is for parents and educators to recognize that there are values here, notwithstanding the frequent inclusion of crudities or features in "bad taste." We have to ask ourselves just what it is that gives the children so much satisfaction in those most disapproved-of yet most popular radio programs—the thriller, the mystery, the not-so-high comedy, and the melodramatic adventure series. We have to assume that young radio fans need not necessarily these particular programs, but *something*—the intangible something that these programs provide, along with the boisterous rough stuff or extravagance.

The problem of meeting these needs is illustrated by a typical source of concern to parents and educators—the numerous "uncle" programs which appeal to younger children. They have no thrills or action, but they use methods very distasteful to many of us. These "uncles" enlist the cooperation of parents to hoodwink and deceive children. They find out, through letters from mothers, which boys and girls have been naughty, untidy, or disobedient, and then, using bribery and threats, they make the children "behave" and (incidentally) make them eat the sponsor's brand of cereal or bread.

We don't like their tricks, and often we don't like their personalities, but the original "uncle" and his imitators have undoubtedly met some real needs of their listeners—they could not otherwise have survived so long. Whatever we think of them, these programs—to which nobody is obliged to listen—must first of all be interesting or amusing to the children. For the boys and girls that is generally enough. Adults sense in the antics of the professional "uncle," who is essentially an actor, on the clown side, a certain insincerity, or an affectation of mirth out of proportion to the humor he presents. Yet even very intelligent children do not seem aware of this at all. The "uncles" themselves resent the suggestion that they are "talking down" to the children. One protested hotly, in an interview, that he was not at all condescending to the children—he was genuinely talking with them "as man to man." What charms do the "uncles" use?

First, all children love to be talked to—instead of being talked at. Most of them probably are not talked to enough, or with. But these particular "uncle" programs have another feature to which chil-

dren respond heartily—the masculine voice. We know that for more and more children the father has become a diminishing feature and force in their daily lives, that masculine contacts are lacking in school as well as in the home. The friendly masculine voice from the radio is perhaps to a growing extent a substitute for the presence and attention and companionship of fathers. To boys and girls it may be a welcome if not an altogether adequate substitute. Children *need*, and thousands of them have shown that they *want*, the masculine point of view, the masculine forms of humor—and just the masculine voice, even if only for singing and reciting Mother Goose.

Again, the "uncle" programs, and some of the others, too, make a tremendous appeal to children by establishing a direct bond between the speaker and each child. The interlocutor also makes each child feel himself a part of a "club." The child's desire for belonging can certainly be fulfilled in a more wholesome and constructive way; but there it is, and the radio uses it.

AS TO older children, we know that they want and need excitement and thrills. Their own lives are, for the most part, so well-ordered and routinized that they have little chance for any sort of adventure. The craving can be, to a degree, satisfied through the imagination—as it is for their elders through mystery tales or books of travel. The hair-raising adventures of radio heroes serve this need for many children, although similar satisfactions could undoubtedly be gotten in other ways. Indeed, real adventures would be even more satisfying, and real adventures need not pull so hard at the hair or the sympathetic nerves. When the substitute-experience comes to the child through the radio's rather narrow channels of stimuli and symbols, the movement has to be swifter, the contrasts have to be sharper. Real experiences take in the whole child and do not need to exaggerate a relatively few details, or to be so intense, to achieve the desired effects.

That there is this difference in the pull between a child's personal activities and experiences and the make-believe is reflected in the fact that attention to radio and to books and the movies falls off as soon as warm weather comes along. Baseball, bicycling, outdoor games, and any other outdoor activities can successfully compete with staying indoors and listening to the radio.

From an analysis of various types of radio programs that hold children and disturb their parents we can get significant cues to children's needs. We can

find for children more exciting things to do in the wintertime, too. We can help boys and girls to form groups or clubs which serve a great variety of tastes and interests and needs. We can expand the children's social experiences, their practical activities, and their personal adventures endlessly, if we enlist in such efforts adults with imagination and understanding—and a sense of fun. Experience has shown that even children who have a great interest in radio will respond eagerly to an opportunity for real activity of various kinds.

But even if children had a richer concrete life there would still be this need for learning about the much larger world that cannot possibly be grasped at first hand. For, like reading, which we encourage, and the drama and other forms of entertainment, the radio has come to be a vital and indispensable part of our common life. And children have to use it more and more—like the rest of us. The basic problems remain. For the child this will mean learning to listen selectively, discriminatingly. For the adults this will mean promoting more intelligent and more sincere programs of entertainment, as well as of news or advertising.

A special problem that no doubt adds to the fears and hostilities of many parents is the question of balance and moderation. Does not the child spend too much time at the radio? Or is he not addicted excessively to the most cruel and bloodthirsty adventures? It is difficult at best to tell in general what is enough, or too much. A parent, who is emotionally involved, is seldom a good judge of how much is too much, or of how hurtful a particular type of fare may be. We are influenced too much by our own tastes and misgivings. And, as a rule, we lack suitable criteria by which to interpret the child's conduct and preferences. We therefore need the help of those who have had experience with large numbers of chil-

dren, and who have developed standards and measures through discussions, and through critical comparisons. The need here is similar to that by which we develop taste in literature, or music, or the drama. It is natural for parents to be concerned about the child who cannot be readily interested in other activities and pastimes, or who seems too much absorbed in a cruel or harrowing type of program from which he is not to be diverted. Experience makes us suspect that such addiction is symptomatic of an underlying need that the child cannot meet himself; and it often becomes necessary to seek professional help in exploring a problem of this sort.

It is gratifying to see the notable improvements already made in both the techniques and the artistry of radio. Schools are helping children find and appreciate better entertainment, better music, and better drama. Much, too, has been done, although here the progress is slow, in developing programs to help young people understand the human world in which they are living, and that into which they are moving.

We know what children need emotionally and intellectually for their entertainment, for their enlightenment, and for their orientation. We have the talents and skills that might make the radio a tremendous power for doing what we all agree should be done. The obligation in this situation seems to me to lie quite as much with educators and artists as with broadcasters and sponsors. We have to dignify the writing and directing of radio programs for children and raise it to an important profession. A generation of radio-minded children will furnish more and more young men and women who sense the possibilities of this medium and who know how to use it effectively. Schools and colleges should recognize that this is as important and cultural an instrument as literature, and give young people more opportunity to work with it constructively.

SEX EDUCATION: Facts and Attitudes

Problems and modern practices in sex education discussed by nine authorities in the fields of medicine, psychiatry, social science, and parent education. Covers parental attitudes, the practical guidance of children, and the special problems of adolescents.

A 65-page pamphlet with revised annotated book list . . . 35 cents

Please order from

CHILD STUDY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

• 221 West 57th Street, New York City

The Education of Youth by Radio

By NORMAN WOELFEL

LET us look into the present adequacy of the various institutions that now contribute to the mental, emotional, and spiritual maturation of young people. Presumably, these formative influences consist of such familiar agencies as the home, the school, the church, the press, the cinema, and the radio. Are these formal and informal educative agencies so shaping the outlook, the abilities, and the habits of American young people as to guarantee the vitality of democratic principles? This question is of particular importance now when we are living through times that try men's souls. Our world, a few years back, seemed secure for the relatively comfortable, devil-catch-the-hindmost kind of life which most Americans were living. But today we realize that we are caught in a world where even our mightiest collective efforts as a nation may prove insufficient to win back the security we cherish. We look askance at our enemies, Germany and Japan, because they not only have the jump on us in armies, weapons, and offensive strategy, but because they possess a background resource of sacrificially-inclined youth and solid civilian resolution carefully developed for just this occasion.

Pearl Harbor jerked us out of a state of mind in which most of us had been reluctant to admit that the war abroad was any concern of ours. Overnight we found ourselves not only involved, but actually at war on a scale greater than ever before in our history. In the present colossal effort of production and mobilization for war, we are discovering that states of mind, mental climates, emotional and spiritual orientations of people matter tremendously. We are finding that the government official, the industrialist, the technologist, the agriculturalist, the salesman, the advertising man, the professional man, the laborer are all reacting to our present emergency more in terms of habit patterns than in terms of what the new situation demands. Our faltering responses indicate not so much, perhaps, a decline in virility of the American spirit, as mental and spiritual confusion induced by the shock of discovering that the war actually seems to be going against us.

If the forces which mold the opinion and attitudes of our people—the school, the press, the cinema, the radio—had succeeded in developing in the minds and hearts of our youth a deep appreciation for what

James Truslow Adams has called the "epic" of America, and a driving resolution to fight for democratic values, we would not now be stumbling all over ourselves in getting organized to win this war. But apologists for "things as they are" and hair-splitting social philosophers vehemently assert that any collective national effort to mold a militant democratic faith in our young people would be blatant regimentation and a denial of the Bill of Rights. No objections seem to be made, however, to the warping of the American mind by the radio industry in selling consumer goods or services, by the motion picture industry in selling entertainment, and by the press in selling news.

Radio executives are hoping that the war emergency will temporarily allay public criticism of the effects of radio upon young people. The plea is being made that the war is upsetting operations, causing headaches, and making the commercial future cloudy to such a degree that "unessential" matters should be put aside. But radio is admittedly one of the crucial agencies in molding character and opinion. It is, therefore, important that broadcasting be used as a positive constructive force in the maintenance and upgrading of the morale of youth as well as of adults. We must cease to regard radio simply as an entertainment medium with no further responsibilities in the total educational process. It should function along with the schools and other communicative media to implant information, beliefs, values, and action impulses definitely favorable to democracy. Out of the working-at-cross-purposes which characterizes the various forces which now influence what young people know, feel, believe, and will to do, must be constructed a more integrated system of educative forces designed to realize the common objective of a democratic victory, a democratic peace, and a democratic future.

We should not forget that it will be the spirit of our youth on the battlefields abroad and in the workshops at home which will determine the final fate of those values we choose to call American.

Let us raise a few basic questions about the boys and girls who are emerging into adult responsibility today:

1. Do American young people possess a thrilling

perspective of our colorful and inspiring development as a democratic nation?

2. Do they understand or appreciate the distinctively American achievements in literature, drama, art, music, architecture, industry, agriculture, science, and technology?
3. Do they feel any secure part in the national tasks that must be undertaken if democracy is to be more effectively realized here in the United States?
4. Do they have any abiding faith in themselves, or in their fellows who come from different social classes, different economic levels, different racial or religious backgrounds?
5. Do they have a sense of the proper goals toward which to direct themselves, or a clear understanding of how these goals may be reached?
6. Do they have any comprehension of the vast and complicated forces operative in the contemporary world?
7. Do they hate the Japs and the Germans?

The only question in this mental and spiritual inventory which can be affirmatively answered for most of our youth is the last one. But hating the enemy will not of itself provide a morale capable of the sustained effort necessary to achieve victory. Japan and Germany know this, and they have provided their youth with a faith that reaches far beyond mere hate. Their faith convinces them that they are superior races destined to rule the world. America also needs a spirit-and-energy-releasing faith in its culture that will enable its youth to dedicate themselves to the tasks that lie ahead.

What is American culture? Is it nothing beyond the barren elementary techniques and the tiresome subject matter now taught in our elementary and secondary schools? Is it no more than what is currently published in our 13,000 newspapers and our 7,000 magazines, what is currently shown in our 20,000 movie houses, or what is currently broadcast over our 900 radio stations? It is frequently asserted that these things do represent contemporary American culture because the schools teach, the newspapers publish, the motion pictures, and the radio broadcasts what the American public demands. It is also asserted that in a democracy the general level of public culture and public spirit improves slowly, and that any attempted speed-up in this process must inevitably fail. Are we, therefore, to give up the hope of developing unity of understanding, unity of democratic faith, unity of purpose, and thus risk losing the war to dic-

tatorial regimes who aim to destroy everything that America represents?

Clearly, if we are to be realistic, a stupendous task confronts us. We need to analyze our historical past to find those ideal features which give meaning and significance to the civilization that we have so far evolved. We need to direct the vast technologically conditioned structure of contemporary America in terms of purposes which will bring to fruition the freedoms and the democratic values of which we boast. We cannot stop short of feeding to 130 million Americans, by every available communicative medium, the essences of American democratic culture, as Russia is feeding Communism, Germany Nazism, and Japan Bushido. Fear of such positive propagandizing means that we are failing to find in democracy anything which distinguishes it from the ideologies which we reject as un-American.

Would there be any relationship between such a national effort to build a spirited democratic morale among youth and the present controversy over children's radio programs? This controversy has been due to fear on the part of parents and educators that neurotic tendencies in children and young people may be traced to the radio fare which they so eagerly consume. The programs which have been criticized are the "cliff-hanger" serials that build up high suspense from day to day, the programs which dramatize the adventures of fantastic or rough-and-ready heroes, the crime programs, and the mystery and horror programs. While there is little clear evidence that any significant amount of nervousness, tension, sleeplessness, or aggressiveness in children has been directly caused by listening to radio programs of this type, the counter-assertion of some psychiatrists that children need radio thrillers to relieve their tensions is also without substantial foundation. Mental strain and neurotic tendencies evidenced by American children are very likely due to the uncoordinated initiation into adulthood which is provided them by the sum total of our educative influences. If affirmative answers to the questions about youth enumerated above could be given for most American young people, there would need to be no suggestion from mental hygienists, nor from anyone else, that fantastic radio entertainment is necessary to afford youth the possibility of sublimative expression of natural impulses suppressed by the contemporary environment.

The hard fact is that our young people need a faith to live by, a goal to aim at, and a task to do which seems important. All of our communicative mechanisms and techniques, as well as our schools, should

be concerned first and foremost with these basic wants. Only when youth has been thus initiated into the meaning of America should these primary educative forces be allowed to pursue less crucial objectives.

It is of especial importance that the appeal of radio programs shall not deteriorate, but shall, if possible, be enhanced. No person in his senses would propose that the fun, adventure, mystery, excitement, and fantasy now characteristic of radio fare should be replaced by shoddy stuff supplied by educators and government bureaucrats. Unless boys and girls continue to get rich, vicarious experience from radio, they will turn from it in disgust. The problem of the scriptwriter and the program director becomes that of adapting existing knowledges, techniques, and devices to a program content derived from the realities, values, and purposes imbedded in American democratic civilization itself.

Many cycles of radio serials can be written which dramatize in a fascinating style the lives of colorful and heroic Americans who have contributed significantly to the infinite variety of American life. The story of Old World backgrounds can be told in radio dramas which depict the physical, social, and intellectual climates from which the early colonists fled. Likewise, excellent radio materials abound in the rich archæological lore of New World backgrounds and of native American races, and the strenuous adventures of our colonial settlers with man, beast, climate, and environment. There is rich excitement and adventure in the discovery and exploration of the vast American hinterland, and in the uncovering of vast natural resources. There are the rugged and adventurous characters who earned their subsistence as pioneers in lumbering, mining, agriculture, shipbuilding, roadbuilding, and manufacturing. There are the intensely interesting tales of American inventive genius. There are the stories of our social institutions, our law enforcement agencies, our churches, our schools, our theatres, our press, our public forums, and the stories of our internal politics, our sectional quarrels, our failures and our successes as a self-governing republic. There are our minority racial and religious groups. There are the stories of our scientific and artistic pioneers. There are the rich backgrounds of folk tales, folk music, and regional history which may be found in every section of our country. There are the great social and political struggles over Negro and woman suffrage, over the legitimacy of trade and industrial unionism, over infraction of the Bill of Rights, over foreign and domestic commerce, over civil service and efficiency in government, over

nationalization of consumer services, over cooperative buying and selling. There are the ever-present, infinite varieties, complexities, and values of contemporary experience. There is the vast uncharted future into which existing developmental trends shed a few scattered beams of interpretative insight.

The radio program possibilities that lie within our native American culture are literally without limit. We do not speak of programs about the past for its own sake, nor of programs which make the present alone more vivid and clear, but of programs which infuse the past with the present in a manner that will direct our understanding and our longings toward a gracious future.

The basic resource materials for such programs about America abound in libraries and museums, but may also be found in limitless quantities in the contemporary environment. The use of these materials for the purposes suggested, however, will probably make it necessary to supplement program directors with persons expert in wide areas of American culture, who can help in checking programs for general authenticity, for direction of emotional emphasis, and for dramatic effectiveness.

DOES this conception of radio programs which are capable of contributing to the character development of youth rule out the possibility of programs designed purely for entertainment? It is indeed entertainment that has been under discussion. If immediate and vital interests of boys and girls, if their capacity for humor, and phantasy, and hero identification are not to be found in the program resource materials suggested here, they are not to be found anywhere. Application of the will and the skill of the creative artists in radio to program resources such as these will drive the over-romanticized fictitious heroics of characters like *Tom Mix*, *Jack Armstrong*, *Superman*, and *The Shadow* into obscurity. The epic of past, present, and future America can provide all fifty-seven varieties of radio thrills, and much more in addition. The world they live in, and this world as it may legitimately be imagined, is exactly what boys and girls are interested in. Clear understanding of the contemporary scene (emotional security to replace the void left by declining religious faiths) and bold resolution to participate in shaping their country more nearly to the specifications of freedom can be built into our young people only by significant vicarious and real experiences in the culture of which they are a part.

(Continued on page 90)

Let's Look at the Comics

By JOSETTE FRANK

RECENT years have seen the growth of a new type of children's reading in America, known—for lack of a better name—as “comics.” This literature appears not only in hundreds of daily and Sunday newspapers but in an astonishing number of monthly and bimonthly magazines. To call these magazines “comics” is hardly descriptive. While there is, to be sure, a bit of humor interspersed in the comic books, they consist for the most part of brightly colored, rapid-fire picture stories—stories of mightily endowed heroes, adventure, phantasy, mystery and magic.

Actually there is nothing very new about comics. Ever since the turn of the century comics have appeared in the colored Sunday Supplements of newspapers. Many of us, looking back with nostalgic delight to our own childhood companionship with *Little Nemo*, *Foxy Grandpa*, *Happy Hooligan* and *Buster Brown*, find it difficult to believe that even in those bygone days a group of troubled parents organized a “League for the Improvement of the Children's Comic Supplements.” Those parents who remember their own early comics with affection, find these modern versions different. The fact is that today's comics are descended not alone from those earlier “funnies” but also from the beloved thrillers of our childhood—stories of train robberies, westerns and detective adventures, in all their glory. They combine the picture-series form of the comic with the content of the thriller.

Parents may question the change of emphasis in today's comics—from comedy to exciting adventure—but it is impossible to ignore their popularity as a form of children's reading. Today's comics number their readers in millions. They appeal to all classes of readers, of high and low degree—high and low I.Q. Among children of all ages and of both sexes, they constitute a great common denominator of interest.

Adults, charged with the responsibility for guiding children's interests and nurturing their tastes, should concern themselves with any form of reading which reaches so many millions of children. Some parents ask: will the reading of these comics affect children's literary taste and art appreciation? Will this rapid-paced, easy picture-reading affect their reading habits? Will so much action or mystery or ex-

citing adventure affect their nervous systems? And, lastly, how can more enduring cultural interests be made attractive enough to equal the comics in juvenile appeal?

These questions are not easily answered, for there is little specific evidence of cause and effect. As to children's reading habits, we know that many avid young readers of comics are also devotees of the best in juvenile literature. For these children, comics are part of a balanced reading diet—relaxation between more serious reading. Such children, the more vocal ones among them at any rate, defend their right to read comics by pointing out that adults read pictorial magazines, too, along with their books. Some of these children, however, feel challenged to explain or even to conceal their comics reading: “I don't usually read them,” they hasten to explain, or “I have to waste a few minutes, not time enough for a book, so I just happened to pick up this”—all the while reading the comics with the most evident relish. It seems a pity that children should be made self-conscious and apologetic about their reading tastes. Certainly no onus should attach to a wide range of taste, or even to variation in levels of interest. Such ranging is, in fact, one of the ways by which children may learn to differentiate and discriminate among the many forms of literature which today claim their attention.

At the other extreme are those children who read comic books and little else; but we have no way of knowing that these same children would read good books or any books at all if they did not have the comics. Many a child who is put off by a solid page of book print finds the captions and balloons of his comics easy to read. We can only conclude that for those children who would not naturally be great readers the comics provide some essential reading experience, obviously pleasurable, in which familiarity with words is acquired incidentally in the small units of print that accompany the pictorial story. For such children, then, comics reading is better than no reading at all.

Between these extremes are those many children who have not yet discovered or developed pleasure in books. It is to these children that we must offer sound, but not censorious, guidance. It is important that these potential young readers should be started

on the road to good books by finding those which will, in some measure, serve the needs and capture the interests for which children turn to the comics.

What are those needs and those interests? To discover these we will have to look at the comics themselves. What are they offering children that satisfies them so deeply?

If we examine the favorite comics of large numbers of children we will find that, however they may differ in form and content, they have one thing in common—action. In the comics things happen. Since this ingredient seems to be inherent in all comics, there can be no question that it constitutes a great part of their appeal. Beyond this one similarity, however, we find a variety of patterns. Leading them all, in quantity, at least, are the adventure stories wherein the young reader may enjoy the thrill of daring deeds and dangerous encounters. Adventure thus enjoyed is one of the time-honored services of reading—especially for the young. That the adventures of the comics are at once impossible and violent seems to detract no wit from their attraction. Invariably they follow the traditional pattern of wishful reading—of heroes triumphant, right vindicated and villainy confounded. The biff-bang methods by which these noble ends are accomplished often startle adults, but to children, less sensitive or less civilized perhaps, these are but short-cuts to action. There is some indication that this very quality in the comics serves children as an outlet for their own aggressive feelings which find so little place for expression in ordinary living today.

Strange and wonderful heroes, projections into the future, and magic devices, too, play a large part in the comics, paralleling the children's own phantasy life, answering the everlasting human longing for magical solutions. Emotionally this type of reading may serve either as escape or as outlet. A moderate amount of escape into fantasy-reading from a too-pressing and too-present reality must be allowed us all. A steady and exclusive pursuit of such reading, however, would suggest a child for whom reality is somehow too hard to bear, and we must look for causes much deeper than the child's reading. The child who constantly has need to escape into phantasy—whether via the comics or the classic fairy tales—needs help in his adjustments to a real world.

Recent months have brought a heavy infiltration of war into the comics—spies and saboteurs, submarine and aerial warfare, army and navy exploits. This was to be expected, for the comics reflect the contemporary scene. In a world preoccupied with

war it would be strange if the children did not share this interest. For many children, especially little boys, heroic deeds of war offer opportunities to identify with the heroes, and a wholesome outlet for normal aggressions which are heightened in wartime. Children will choose their heroes in accordance with their own inner needs—some will wish for the uniform and glory of a MacArthur, others for the invulnerability and super-might of a Superman. We cannot choose their heroes for them. Rather we can be guided by their spontaneous choices in introducing them to other heroes in literature and in life.

Crime and criminals, too, are a part of life in the comics, as they are a part of the daily news; there must be villains for heroes to overcome. Occasionally we hear statements attributed to young delinquents that a specific unsocial act was suggested by reading; but we know, of course, how undependable and how oversimplified are such attempts to analyze motivations which lie too deep for casual recognition. We cannot expect children—least of all children under strain—to understand or identify the sources of their own behavior.

Fortunately, children prefer to identify with the hero who, in the comics, always triumphs. Most young people will identify with the "good guys" and not with the "bad guys" of their comics, not because "crime does not pay"—as the comic books point out—but because they find socially approved ways of behavior more satisfying to their own emotional lives. We could not—even if we would—keep our children from a knowledge of the evil that abounds in the world. But we must also open up to boys and girls both literature and life experiences which will point up the real and lasting satisfactions of a good life.

IT HAS been said that the comics are no longer comic. Yet humor is not entirely absent from the modern comics. Some few of the monthly magazines are truly humorous in the traditional slapstick manner, with odd characters and childlike animals, incongruous situations and absurdities of language. Even the more serious books of the heroic type usually include a sprinkling of jokes or a comic page or two. And humorous bits crop up, too, in unexpected places, as when, in the midst of a melodramatic gesture, the hero breaks into airy persiflage, to the discomfiture of the villain. We will have to accept the fact that children's ideas of what is funny may not coincide with ours. If their taste runs to slapstick and somewhat obvious humor we must be tol-

(Continued on page 90)

Science Contributes

CHILDREN'S FEARS AND PHANTASIES, AND THE MOVIES, RADIO, AND COMICS

By S. HARCOURT PEPPARD, M.D.

LISTENING to the radio, reading the comics, and going to the movies have become an important part of children's everyday experiences. That they hold an absorbing interest for children is too evident, and because such activities apparently require little or no effort on their part, we are likely to conclude that they cannot be of much value. Such a conclusion is far from justified.

When we examine the content of these radio programs, comics, and movies, we are amazed at the sort of things from which children derive pleasure. We expect to find them interested in adventure, but we are a little shocked at the ingredients—the lack of reality, the amount of hostile expression, and the harrowing suspense. Children seem to thrive on violence. From observation of children participating in any one of these activities it is obvious that they are intensely interested and that they are finding something which satisfies some inner need. We may be concerned lest they develop a philosophy of life in which their only goals will be obtaining pleasure and expressing hostile aggression. Yet we realize that normal children must have outlets for their drives, for their spirit of adventure, for their aggression, and that pleasure is essential to their adjustment. By and large, children make their selection on the basis of their individual inner needs. They like those things that portray for them their own phantasy life; but we must guard against their over-exposure in these programs to situations which will touch off deep-seated anxieties.

One of our great concerns has been that absorption in these interests will cause our children to develop fears and anxieties. In order that we may properly evaluate our children's reactions we should recognize a clear distinction between fear and anxiety. Fear is the reaction to a real danger; it is the emotional reaction we have when we are faced with possible injury. Anxiety is the emotional reaction to a situation which we believe to be dangerous, but where, in reality, no real external danger, or very little danger, actually exists. Anxiety is common in very young children because, among other things, lack of sufficient intellectual development makes it impossible for them properly to evaluate the possibility of danger. In normal development the reaction of anxiety tends

to disappear. Fear is the result of a conscious and rational perception of external danger. Anxiety is a product of the unconscious mind—we actually do not know what it is we fear. Except in the very young, then, fear is the normal response, while anxiety indicates emotional disturbance which arises from deep-seated inner sources too complicated to discuss here.

If danger of possible injury is made sufficiently realistic, any child may react with the emotion of fear. However, all clinical evidence indicates that the dramatization of external danger to life and limb is never the basic factor in the production of anxiety. What it can do is to set off an already existing anxiety. There are two points of importance here: the first is that dramatizations should not contain situations which are obviously fear-provoking to most children; and the second is that anxiety, because of its complicated unconscious structure, may be set off by incidents or content which to the healthily adjusted child contain not the slightest element of danger. On the basis of our present data it is fair to say that children do not develop neuroses or other emotional disorders from listening to children's radio programs, or reading comics, or going to the movies. On the contrary, when they do not touch off existing anxieties, participation in these may have positive values for the emotionally unstable as well as the adjusted child.

It is essential that careful thought be given to the emotional content involved in the writing and producing of these radio programs, comics, and movies for children, but all our efforts in this direction will be futile unless we keep enough suspense, aggression, and adventure to hold the children's interest. If we fail to do this children will not participate in them and, what is most important, will find outlets in other, more unfavorable channels. The presence of suspense and aggression, however, do not exclude the possibility of educational values. Actually, they enhance these possibilities.

In addition to our interest in and constructive criticism of radio, comics, and movies, we have a further duty. There is a wide variation in the age, intellectual level, needs, and emotional stability of our children. Because of this, no matter how carefully

planned the programs are, it still remains the responsibility of parents to evaluate their children's reactions individually. In some cases it will be found that a child cannot be exposed to certain types of dramatization because he develops an anxiety reaction. Others will show an inordinate preoccupation with phantasy, aggression, and harrowing suspense. The anxiety reactions may be indicated by loss of interest in work or play, unexplainable phobias, or recurrent nightmares. For all these children an attempt should be made to find other outlets, and the degree and seriousness of their reaction should be evaluated so that appropriate handling may be possible. Some in this group will need study, and perhaps treatment, by child guidance specialists.

In our attempts to guide children we must use standards which are related to their age, interests, and reactions, rather than our adult standards. Perhaps the most important distinction between these two standards is that of the relationship between reality and phantasy. As children develop, realistic orientation increases and phantasy decreases. Their thoughts, their interests, and their activities become more and more related to the actual world about them and less to the world of their own creation, where their size, their importance, and their heroic deeds of love and vengeance can be achieved without effort and with little fear of retaliation or guilt. For young children, escape into phantasy is essential because of their relative helplessness. An important part of the phantasy takes the form of an illusory element in their thoughts about their ability to protect themselves against danger. On the one hand, they recognize this helplessness, and, on the other, they compensate for it by an interest in and identification with beings of superhuman power, strength, and ability. In early life they incorporate within themselves the size, the strength, and the power of their parents. They exaggerate these attributes—the mother as the most attractive (perhaps she's a princess), the father as the strongest, the richest, and the most powerful individual. By this exaggeration the child enhances his own stature.

Another aspect of this helplessness is that it makes it impossible for children to express directly, in many instances, their hostility and aggression. They therefore find an indirect outlet for these feelings in dramatizations. Their basic fear of expressing these feelings directly is their fear of adults. Thus the media they choose for the expression must be acceptable to adults, or at least adults must indicate their permission. The arbitrary withholding of such permission

will lead the child to seek secret and less acceptable means of expression. When these secret channels are used the germ of anxiety will flourish, and parents lose the opportunity for developing a sound relationship based on mutual confidence and understanding.

Under our culture, children are necessarily exposed to many fear-provoking and destructive influences. Our first impulse is to protect them from all these forces, but, on second thought, we realize that these are a part of reality and that our job is to fit children to live in this reality. In order to do this they must eventually be fully aware of these destructive forces. They must understand them before they can cope with them. Our problem, then, is to guide them in facing and understanding the reality of these dangers. This is a process of education and should be gradual. Even if all children's radio programs, comics, and movies were made acceptable, we should still face the probability that children will listen to programs, attend movies, and read literature designed for adult consumption. In many instances it is just as difficult to guide a child away from these disturbing adult amusements and interests as it is to guide him away from those specifically set up for children which produce a train of undesirable reactions because they stir up an already existing anxiety.

Education is essential for growth to maturity, but we cannot educate children without constantly keeping in mind the basic necessity of pleasure as a motivation. In this growth to maturity the need to have pleasure gratified immediately must be gradually replaced by the discovery that this is neither possible or desirable at all times. A child who develops normally, develops a willingness for such a delay, and this willingness represents both an intellectual understanding and an emotional acceptance of the fact that the demands of reality must be met in order that ultimate pleasure be assured. There is one basic criterion for radio programs, for comics, and for movies, and that is that children's participation in them will bring them the pleasure of constructive outlets for their inner drives. The problem for adults is to make these outlets meet this criterion.

DR. ELSA BRUNOTTE

Speech Correction Specialist

Stuttering, Lispings, Speaking Voice Disorders. Special
Attention to Birth Injury Cases. Resident or Visiting.

Hotel Lucerne, 201 W. 79th St., New York. ENdicott 2-7100

Intensive individual work in child's home

Parents' Questions and Discussion

Edited by the Staff of the Child Study Association of America

Do you think it is wise to listen to war news over the radio when little children are in the room? My husband wants to hear the news broadcasts at all hours, but what about the effect on four-year-old Junior?

Probably the war news has less effect on Junior than you imagine. Fortunately, young children have little power to grasp the meaning of distant horrors. Most of them will play on, undisturbed, while their parents listen to the radio—unless the adults themselves are obviously upset. Parental distress is contagious. It is largely a question of how much listening we can take. Many of us need to learn moderation and mutual consideration here.

However, highly dramatized incidents—the sinking of a ship or the crash of a plane—may take on terrifying reality for a child. Graphic accounts of such events are probably best avoided when children are about. But being hustled out of the room, or seeing Mother switch off the radio in frantic haste, may be more upsetting than the story itself. The child needs to feel close to his family at such moments and to know that he can discuss his fears and confusions openly. A “hush, hush” atmosphere makes him feel excluded and is far from reassuring.

I wish you would tell me what to do about my ten-year-old daughter. She has always loved good books, but now she has stopped reading them altogether. This year she has read comic books incessantly at home, surreptitiously at school, and while walking to and from school. About a month ago, in desperation, I took away all her comics and forbade her to buy any more. She accepted this quietly, but has not gone back to reading books. I begin to wonder if she ever will. Was I wrong in handling the matter this way?

Many children read comics and good books, too. Comics aren't poison. But when the interest in them is excessive, as it seems to be in this case, it suggests that some other need is not being met. Forbidding comics merely attacks a symptom without reaching the cause. Furthermore, it tends to injure the child's self-esteem by discrediting her taste, leaving her no more receptive to “good reading.”

It is more important to find out what this child is

looking for in her comics reading—or what she is escaping. A child who is active at home and at school, who has friends, and constructive interests and real freedom to play, may read comics, too, but she will read them as stop-gaps for idle moments. Your daughter may need help in finding challenging things to do and places to go.

If she really found pleasure in her earlier reading, not merely approval, then she will certainly read books again when the comics no longer satisfy her—choosing them, however, to meet her own needs. To urge books upon her now, when her interests are obviously elsewhere, will serve no useful purpose, and may even arouse an antagonism to them. But books should certainly be kept as available as possible, with provision for the utmost freedom of choice. She may even go on to reading adult books soon—and continue to read comics, too.

My daughter, aged twelve, goes to the movies every Saturday afternoon with a group of friends. There is just one theater in town, and sometimes the pictures seem quite unsuitable. Should I simply forbid her to go?

No, I should not simply forbid her to go. That is apt to create more problems than it solves. It is not wise to keep her away from her friends because being part of a group is very important to a child of that age. If a particular movie seems definitely objectionable, explain your objections and ask her to stay away; but then help her to plan some attractive alternative for that afternoon. Have her friends to lunch, perhaps, and take them skating or bowling or on an interesting trip. But don't be too alarmed about an occasional unsuitable movie. The meaning and content of these pictures often make little impression on immature children. If your daughter should be upset by a picture, discussing it with her may be a real opportunity to help her build up some discrimination about what she sees and some perspective about the human problems portrayed.

The issue you are facing should be met in a broader way as well, for the sake of all the children in your town. Through parent groups, women's clubs, and other organizations, many communities have persuaded their theaters to show week-end programs more suitable for young people. And they have or-

ganized other attractive activities for boys and girls—dramatic clubs, camera clubs, hobby groups of all sorts, hiking and outdoor sports—which easily rival the lure of the movies. Today there is an additional opportunity to direct children into satisfying group work connected with the war effort. Where schools and parent groups have approached the problem in this positive spirit the results have always been surprisingly successful.

My thirteen-year-old son has a radio in his room, and, to my way of thinking, has it on far too often. Besides listening to a lot of trash, he keeps it going while he is doing his homework. I can't see how he can possibly concentrate. I ask him to turn it off while he is studying, but he answers that he is "just copying something," or that it "doesn't bother" him. His school work is good, but it could be better. How can I meet this problem without constant conflict and nagging?

The radio is part of the world of the younger generation. It is not, for most of them, the nagging disturbance to peace that it often is for older people. Many children can concentrate with the radio going, just as adults learn to work in spite of traffic noises or clicking typewriters. Some work better, in fact, when it is not too quiet.

Various tests have been made to demonstrate the effect on concentration of the radio and other disturbances—"bad air," hot rooms, etc. The results have not shown reduced efficiency in general, but point rather to strong individual differences in these respects. The problem evidently is not a simple, obvious one. We may be hesitant, too, about accepting the results of such laboratory tests as final.

It may be that radio listening and reading at the same time, or listening and talking as most adults do, has, like children's listening and studying, certain insidious effects on mental life that can't be measured, but are none the less real. If you believe this, you will want to run your home accordingly, even though you can't prove you're right.

I would suggest talking the whole thing over with your boy, taking care to approach him at a time when he is feeling reasonable and cooperative—not at a moment of tension and resistance. See if he won't discriminate between a background of musical programs, monotonous announcements, etc., and the dramatic programs that he may very well admit *are* distracting. Listen to his side of the matter and avoid a dogmatic attitude. Then make your plans together for a general improvement.

Suggestions for Study: New Voices Speak to Our Children

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

I. A POSITIVE APPROACH

Radio, movies and comics are still young and often crude. Many parents fear their influence. They have tried to protect their children by individual censorship or by group pressure on producers. Neither method has been very successful because both are negative. We need a *positive approach* which will capitalize the great possibilities inherent in these new forms of communication. Here are magnificent tools for the service of education and democracy if only we learn to use them. This should be our real concern. But before we can act intelligently we must understand what our children are seeking and what they need.

II. WHAT CHILDREN SEEK

In choosing reading, movies and radio programs children—and adults too—seek satisfaction for inner needs. In the world of phantasy they find excitement and adventure, power, success, romance, often an outlet for aggressive feelings that can not be expressed openly. Up to a certain point this is desirable and healthy, especially for children, since they are necessarily limited in obtaining direct satisfactions of this sort. These values must be retained.

III. WHAT ARE THE DANGERS?

Interest in second-hand thrills may become excessive, of course, but only if real satisfactions are lacking. It is important to see that children have chances to do and achieve varied experiences and adventures. This is the best insurance against excessive preoccupation with radio, movies and comics. When a child is too absorbed in the phantasy world he is in need of help. But this must be regarded as a *symptom* of emotional problems, not as their *cause*. So, too, with the anxieties and delinquencies so often blamed upon thrillers. Deep-seated problems may be touched off in this way—but the thriller is not the cause of the problem. We must look below the surface in such cases and give the child the help and special protection which he needs.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. John is an only child. Until he started school he was quite satisfied with the carefully chosen stories his mother read to him. He never listened to children's radio programs. After a week in the first grade he became a radio fan. His mother thinks his favorite programs trashy and stupid. Should she forbid his listening? Can you suggest reasons for John's new interest? Will his taste be spoiled?

2. Charles, a sturdy, happy ten-year-old, has developed a passion for gangster movies, toy pistols, and finger-printing sets. His father is worried and wonders if he should interfere. What do you think?

Will Charles turn to delinquency if he is permitted to see these pictures frequently?

3. Mary is a rather timid little girl of seven. She grows frightened and upset when her eleven-year-old brother turns on the thriller programs he adores. How can this problem be handled with justice to both children?

4. The Cabbot family delights in good literature and fine music. The older children have followed their parents' lead. Nancy, aged ten, rebels. She reads nothing but comics, though the house is stocked with good books and she "deafens" the family with radio jazz. Can you suggest possible reasons for Nancy's attitude? How should this situation be handled?

REFERENCE READING

- "We, The Parents" 1939
By Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg
Chapter IX—Radio and Movies Harper
- "What Books for Children?" Revised ed. 1941
By Josette Frank Doubleday Doran
Chapter VII—The Comics
Chapter XII—Radio and Reading
- "Are We Movie Made?" 1938
By Raymond Moley Macy Masius
- "The Effect of Comic Books on the Ideology of Children" ... July, 1941
By Lauretta Bender and Reginald Lourie
American Jour. of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. XI, No. 3, p. 540.
- "Educational Broadcasting" 1938
Edited by C. S. Marsh Univ. of Chicago Press
- "Motion Pictures and Radio—Report of the N. Y. State
Regents' Inquiry" 1939
By Elizabeth Laine McGraw Hill Co.

CAMP SUNNINGDALE for Girls 7-16 Years of Age

SEBAGO LAKE, MAINE

A complete vacation program with emphasis
on riding, water sports, and campcraft.
Music, arts and dancing. Limited to 50 girls.

New York Associate
MRS. F. LUST
334 West 86th Street
Tel. SChuyler 4-1945

Director
MRS. J. GOLDBERG
12 Alderwood Road
Newton Centre, Mass.

HELP YOUR COUNTRY—
BUY
UNITED STATES
WAR SAVINGS BONDS

Radio Programs

ABOUT AMERICA AND THE WAR

THE war and wartime America have not yet penetrated our radio programs for children. A survey of the juvenile offerings of the major networks reveals only one network program dealing with current world affairs—Ask Young America. A number of the wartime programs addressed to adults are, however, especially suitable for young people's listening in those regions of the country where the hour of broadcasting is not too late for young listeners.

Ask Young America—Blue Network. Saturdays, 11:30 a.m., E.W.T.

A junior round-table discussion on topics of current national interest. The participants are picked from Chicago's junior high schools; the mediator is an adult. Participation in such a program is undoubtedly stimulating for these young students and for their schoolmates who listen in. The program has value in suggesting a new technique of discussion for the classroom. As entertainment it has the handicap that an unrehearsed show is difficult for inexperienced children to sustain in pace and interest.

This Is War—All networks. Saturdays, 7:00 p.m., E.W.T.

The four major networks present, from coast to coast, a dramatic and stirring picture of the fight America and its Allies are waging for the survival of the democratic way of life. Various aspects of this war are portrayed—America's production lines, its fighting forces, its heroic episodes, and the faith it defends. Excellently written script and fine dramatization make this a thoroughly effective program of inspirational entertainment.

March of Time—NBC. Fridays, 9:30 p.m., E.W.T.

This dramatized presentation of stirring events in history is devoting its present programs to "history in the making"—episodes in the present war and on the current political and social scene. The details of characterization and events are convincingly presented. While the material and presentation, intended for adults, is usually too realistic for young children, boys and girls of high school age will find these programs exciting and interesting as pictures of what goes on in various parts of the world today.

(Continued on page 95)

THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH BY RADIO

(Continued from page 75)

The necessity which our present Victory campaign has placed upon us to clarify for our fighting men, our workers, and our youth, the meaning of American democracy gives us the right to demand of the advertising and the radio industry a public contribution of great magnitude. This may mean immediate and drastic changes in the present radio situation. The industry's voluntary contribution of a few so-called morale programs or of free time for governmental informational services will not be enough. A pooling of public and private thinking, and a pooling of public and private financial resources, will undoubtedly be required if a comprehensive emergency radio policy is to be developed. There is so much at stake in the building of a unified democratic outlook and of a unified democratic effort in America today that timidity, apprehension, and fear should be cast to the winds. It begins to look as if neither business men nor the public in general can trust to *life as usual* nor to *communications as usual* if an American spirit capable of defeating Japan and Germany is to be constructed out of the confusion prevailing in our efforts, opinions and fundamental values.

If we would think effectively about children's radio programs today, we are forced to examine the entire complex of American character and opinion. There we see revealed to us the challenge of a mighty creative effort in education. Millions upon millions of Americans must somehow learn together in humble and cooperative spirit how the American past and the American present in combination can lead into a world that is secure and democratic. Our communicative agencies, and our schools, if properly coordinated and dedicated to the ideals we cherish, are equal to the task. If we fail to adapt them to this purpose, we can no longer hope to transform the American dream of a free world into reality.



Established 1924

PIONEER YOUTH CAMP

In the Catskills.

Walter Ludwig, Exec. Dir.

Boys and Girls, 6-14 years. Small Groups.

Nine weeks—\$175. Shorter periods available.

Sports, folk dancing, dramatics, painting, woodworking.

For ages 14-17, Work Camp at lower rates.

Balanced program of work and play.

Non-Sectarian

Non-Profit-Making

MRS. FRIMA FRUMES, Registrar
219 West 29th Street, New York City

Pennsylvania 6-3054

LET'S LOOK AT THE COMICS

(Continued from page 77)

erant, realizing that this is a stage in their development. We can also introduce them to some of the delectably humorous books of recent years whose text and pictures will meet this same need.

Love interest, when it enters into the comics at all, seems to have little appeal for younger readers. Romance is not a prevailing note in comics addressed to children. Those few magazines which mix high romance with adventure are, however, the special delight of the high school age, and there is no reason why romantic love should not have a legitimate place in adolescent reading, provided it is presented with due regard for decency and suitability.

There are, unfortunately, some few comic magazines which fall far below acceptable standards of suitability for children. These appear to be addressed to older adolescents and adults, appealing to sex interests beyond the level of children of the greatest comics-reading ages. If young children were the only purchasers of comic books, this type would undoubtedly die a natural death (a number of the most objectionable already have). The titles of these books have never been found on the lists of children's favorites.

It may be comforting to reflect that many of our noted literary figures today confess proudly to having been addicts of the Nick Carter-Frank Merriwell breed of literature in their youth—with no noticeable damage to their adult literary style or tastes. In the same way, today's children will outgrow their comics, remembering them, as adults, with nostalgic pleasure!

The task of parents, librarians and teachers is to help children toward wider appreciations and satisfactions in their reading as in their other activities. It is good pedagogy to begin where the children are; and we may well begin with the comics. For one thing we can help children to recognize and evaluate the differences among the comics. If we ourselves will explore them, we will find that some have definitely better story material, better pictures, better print, more careful editing than others, and children can be made aware of these differences. We may be surprised at the discernment and discrimination with which they often select and discard their comic books. And then, if we will but stop, look and listen we will find in their choices invaluable clues to children's interests. If we use their comics wisely and tolerantly we will find that their young readers will progress

to other books and other heroes which will serve these same interests.

But let us look to ourselves. For the children are showing us plainly enough the paucity of real and satisfying experiences in their lives. Not more and better reading alone, but more and better living and doing and creating will give them some of the satisfactions for which they turn to the comics. Those children for whom home and school are busy, active places, whose work and play are alive and rich with real and meaningful activity, will take the comics in their stride. They will read the comics—yes—for these are today a part of the common mores of children. This reading will take its proportionate place in their full lives, as one among many absorbing and enjoyable activities that make up a happy, satisfying childhood.

NOTE: The Children's Book Committee of the Child Study Association is making a study of comic books with a view to finding criteria and standards by which to help parents evaluate these publications, suggesting some which seem to meet these standards. The results of this study will appear in a future issue of CHILD STUDY.

What Books for Children?

by Josette Frank

PARTIAL CONTENTS

● The Comics—what is their appeal?

● Radio and Reading.

● Complete Reading Lists for all ages—including fifty pages about the new juvenile books.

● Learning to discriminate.

● Effects of reading on character.

And many other topics.

\$2.50

Doubleday, Doran

EVERY PARENT, teacher and Child Study Group needs the new edition of this authoritative book that answers all your questions about children's reading.

Miss Frank, editorial associate of the Child Study Association, bases her intelligent advice on years of study. She includes brand new chapters on "comic books" and radio programs, as well as a practical, new evaluated book-list that shows you how to make reading a stimulating force in your child's life. Completely revised.

A new book on child guidance
by a frequent contributor to
CHILD STUDY

Children Have Their Reasons

By Ruth Wendell Washburn

"The greatest value of Dr. Washburn's book seems to me to be its general moral atmosphere, the sanity, the true sense of the relative importance of things, its general warmth of feeling, its acceptance of reverence and poetry and fun as food for growth as essential as bread and meat."—Dorothy Canfield Fisher in her Introduction to this book. \$2.00

APPLETON-CENTURY, 35 W. 32nd St., N. Y.

METROPOLITAN

FIREPROOF WAREHOUSE, Inc.

Storage · Moving
Packing · Shipping

SPECIAL VAULTS
for Silver, Rugs, Drapes
FURS AND RUGS
Demoted and Stored

AMSTERDAM AVE. at 83rd St., N. Y.

Phone Trafalgar 7-6800